



Federal Communications Commission
Consumer & Governmental Affairs Bureau
Washington, D.C. 20554

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Federal Communications Commission
Office of the Secretary

The Honorable John Warner
United States Senator
1003 First Union Bank Building
213 South Jefferson Street
Roanoke, VA 24011-1714

Dear Senator Warner:

Thank you for your letter of April 21, 2005, to the Federal Communications Commission (Commission or FCC), on behalf of your constituent, Ms. Ranica Fitch, expressing her support for, and concerns regarding Video Relay Service (VRS), a form of telecommunications relay service (TRS). Your correspondence was forwarded to the Commission's Consumer & Governmental Affairs Bureau for handling.

Ms. Fitch's letter states that she "loves" the service, but would like to see more interpreters hired to decrease the time spent waiting for a VRS interpreter. Ms. Fitch also expresses concern over not being able to reach individuals who use D-Link videophones.

The Commission has always been, and continues to be supportive of the provision of VRS. Although VRS has been widely used only the past three years, in the past six months alone, usage has grown from 934,747 minutes in July, 2004 to 1,574,378 minutes in February, 2005. All of these minutes are funded from the interstate TRS fund, which the Commission oversees.

Ms. Fitch's concerns relate to two issues currently being considered by the FCC: interoperability of equipment used to access VRS and the "speed of answer" for VRS. On February 15, 2005, the California Coalition of Agencies Serving the Deaf and Hard of Hearing filed a Petition for Declaratory Ruling on Interoperability, requesting that the FCC prohibit any VRS provider that receives compensation from the Interstate Telecommunications Relay Service (TRS) Fund from purposely restricting its deaf and hard-of-hearing customers to a single VRS provider via the software or hardware of their VRS equipment or through exclusivity agreements with those customers. On March 1, 2005, the FCC released a Public Notice (DA 05-509) seeking public comment on this issue. Comments were due April 15, 2005, and reply comments were due May 2, 2005. The issue of interoperability will be addressed in a future order.

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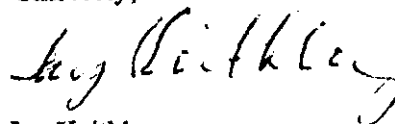
The Commission understands and shares Ms. Fitch's concern over the amount of time sometimes needed to reach a VRS communications assistant, or an "interpreter" as Ms. Fitch refers to them. There is currently no speed of answer requirement mandating how quickly a VRS provider must answer an incoming VRS call. The Commission waived the application of its traditional speed of answer rule for VRS to allow providers to gain experience in their ability to handle VRS traffic. However, this issue is raised in a Further Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (FNPRM) the Commission released on June 30, 2004 (FCC 04-137). The Commission sought further comment on the speed of answer issue in a Public Notice released on February 8, 2005 (DA 05-339), and the speed of answer issue for VRS will also be addressed in a future order.

The Commission encourages Ms. Fitch to actively participate in proceedings before the Commission to ensure that her opinions are expressed and considered fully. The Commission has available an e-mail service designed to apprise consumers about developments at the Commission, to disseminate consumer information materials prepared by the Commission to a wide audience, and to invite comments from other parties on Commission regulatory proposals. This free service enables consumers to subscribe to and receive FCC fact sheets, consumer brochures and alerts, and public notices, among other consumer information. To subscribe, an individual should send an e-mail to subscribe@info.fcc.gov and, in either the subject line or the message insert: "subscribe fcc-consumer-info first name last name" (e.g., "subscribe fcc-consumer-info John Doe").

The Commission also invites Ms. Fitch to visit the Consumer & Governmental Affairs Bureau's Internet web site at <http://www.fcc.gov/cgb> or the Commission's Home Page located at <http://www.fcc.gov>.

A copy of Ms. Fitch's correspondence has been placed in the public record for this proceeding. The Commission appreciates your inquiry. Please do not hesitate to contact us if you have further questions.

Sincerely,



Jay Keithley
Deputy Bureau Chief
Consumer & Governmental Affairs Bureau

JOHN WARNER
VIRGINIA

COMMITTEES:
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ENVIRONMENT AND PUBLIC WORKS
HEALTH, EDUCATION, LABOR, AND PENSIONS
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April 21, 2005

225 HUSSELL SENATE OFFICE BUILDING
WASHINGTON, DC 20510-4801
(202) 224-2023
<http://warner.senate.gov>
CONSTITUENT SERVICE OFFICES

4900 WORLD TRADE CENTER
101 WEST MAIN STREET
NORFOLK, VA 23510-1690
(757) 441-3079

235 FEDERAL BUILDING
PO BOX 887
ABINGDON, VA 24212-0887
(276) 828-8158

MAIN STREET CENTRE II
600 EAST MAIN STREET
RICHMOND, VA 23219-3538
(804) 771-2579

1003 FIRST UNION BANK BUILDING
213 SOUTH JEFFERSON STREET
ROANOKE, VA 24011-1714
(540) 857-2876

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Ms. Diane Atkinson
Congressional Liaison Specialist
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street, SW, Room 8-C453
Washington, D.C. 20554

Dear Ms. Atkinson:

Attached is a letter which I have received from Ms. Ranica Fitch regarding her support of the Video Relay Service for deaf persons and her request for additional interpreters for the service.

I would appreciate it if you would review this matter and provide me with the benefit of your comments.

Thank you for your assistance.

With kind regards, I am

Sincerely,

John Warner
John Warner

JW/cc

5 MAY 2005 RCUD

Please reply to the office indicated: Washington ☐ Richmond ☐ Roanoke ☒ Abingdon ☐ Norfolk ☐

PRINTED ON RECYCLED PAPER

Ranica Fitch
233 V.E.S. Road
Lynchburg, VA 24503

April 11, 2005

John Warner
1003 First Union Bank Building
213 South Jefferson Street
Roanoke, Virginia 24011

Dear Sir Warner,

I would like to express what problem I'm having right now. We have this hot issue for deaf and hard of hearing people which is about Video Relay Service. Video Relay Service is for communication for deaf people to use on the TV and have a camera with DSL. It has lots of good experiences for us, the deaf people. We, the deaf people, love using the Video Relay Service and we couldn't live with out it. Video Relay Service (VRS) is much better than Internet Relay on the computer, because on VRS, you can see everything included expressions, and face to face, better than just read what operator says from that person talking. I suggest you to hire more interpreters so we don't have to wait longer that much. And one thing more that my concern is calling some people from D-Link, because it has different IP address and has difficulty to call them. Other than my concerns, I'm enjoying it a lot and thanks for your time reading it.

Sincerely,

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Ranica /RJ 1" Fitch